

STATE OF CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH

COMMUNITY COURT SESSION IN HARTFORD

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FALL 2005 NEWSLETTER

IN THIS EDITION...

State of Connecticut Superior Court
Community Court Session in Hartford
80 Washington Street
Hartford, CT 06106



State of Connecticut
Judicial Branch
Community Court
Session
At Hartford

Presiding Judge, Jorge A. Simón

FALL 2005
News & Updates

Produced by Chris Pleasanton, Vol. 7, Issue 7

COMMUNITY COURT MILESTONES

50,000 Cases & 200,000 Community Service Hours

The Community Court in Hartford surpassed two milestones in late July when it topped both 50,000 cases and 200,000 hours of community service performed by its defendant work crews.

"Reaching these milestones is a good opportunity for us to look at what has happened over the past six years," Judge Jorge Simón added. "I see tens of thousands of defendants paying back the community for their actions, and I see thousands more who have connected to the services they needed but did not have before they came to the Community Court."

First opened in November 1998, the Community Court Session in Hartford deals exclusively with misdemeanor crimes and city ordinances considered to be "quality of life" violations, including public drinking, trespass, shoplifting, prostitution, and excessive noise, among others. The Community Court's jurisdiction covers the city of Hartford and five surrounding suburban towns.

Excluding motor vehicle cases, the Community Court in Hartford is consistently among the top five busiest of the 22 Geographic Area criminal courts in Connecticut.

"Police officers who recognize the positive impact of enforcing quality of life crimes should be acknowledged for their hard work," Assistant State's Attorney Glenn Kaas added. "Without their efforts, the Community Court would not be able to do what it does."

"For many people, the Community Court is a fair way to resolve their legal matters without the entanglements of a complicated and expensive process," Public Defender Ray Cuatto said. "Plus they might get some help and will have their public record of the case erased in most cases."



COMMUNITY COURT LEADERSHIP: Supervising Marshal Tom Grodecki, Court Coordinator Chris Pleasanton, Public Defender Ray Cuatto, Assistant State's Attorney Glenn Kaas, Supervising Clerk Gloria Milner, Hon. Jorge Simón, Community Service Manager Chris Mena

SUMMER 2005 STATISTICS

	JUNE	JULY	AUG
Total Arraignments	6 5 1	8 7 6	7 8 6
Community Service Hours	1 5 3 0	2 0 5 2	2 1 5 4
Social Services Referrals	1 1 9	1 8 2	3 6 3
Referrals to Mediation	4 1	4 7	5 6
Rate of Compliance	9 3 %	9 2 %	9 3 %
Suburban Caseload	2 0 %	1 2 %	1 5 %

Please feel free to email the court with questions or comments at:
Hartford.Courtcourt@jud.state.ct.us
 and visit the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch website at:
www.jud.state.ct.us

THANK YOU JUDGE BEACH

The Community Court in Hartford would like to extend a special thank you to the Honorable Robert J. Beach, who is leaving after five years as Administrative Judge for the Hartford Judicial District. As Administrative Judge, Judge Beach oversaw security, staffing, and multiple other policy issues concerning the administration of Hartford-area courts. We would sincerely like to thank him for his support and guidance over the past five years.

(At Right) Judge Beach at his July 2005 farewell gathering



Photo courtesy of Jeff Hammer

COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK SITES

JUNE 2005

JUNE 1 Park Terr., Park St., Hillside Ave. JUNE 2 Sigourney St., Collins St. Wethersfield Ave., Anawan St. JUNE 3 FOODSHARE
 JUNE 6 Nelton Ct., Ebony Horse Barn JUNE 7 Mann St., Wethersfield Ave., Elliot St., Seymour St., Pawtucket St., Retreat Ave.
 JUNE 8 Hillside Ave., Hamilton St., Pope Park Hwy. JUNE 9 N. Main St., Windsor St., SAND facility JUNE 10 FOODSHARE,
 Lincoln St., Ward St., Washington St. JUNE 13 Carpenter St., Madison St., Kibbe St., Ebony Horse Barn
 JUNE 15 Wilson St., Harrison St., Glendale Ave. JUNE 16 Ebony Horse Barn, Windsor St., Capitol Ave., Hamilton Ave.
 JUNE 17 FOODSHARE, Groton St., Lisbon St., Norwich St., Stonington St. JUNE 20 Nelton Ct., Capen St., Sisson Ave.,
 Wawarme Ave. JUNE 21 Colt Park, Goodwin Park JUNE 22 Russ St., Putnam St., Ward St. Cedar St. Hudson St.,
 Wadsworth St., John St. JUNE 23 Ebony Horse Farm, Washington St., Russ St. JUNE 24 FOODSHARE JUNE 27 Broad St.,
 Maple Ave., New Britain Ave., Windsor St., JUNE 28 Windsor St., Capitol Ave., Hamilton St., Pope Park Hwy
 JUNE 29 Collins St., Ashley St., Sargeant St., Homestead Ave. JUNE 30 Bond St., Barker St., Adelaide St.

JULY 2005

JULY 1 Nelton Court JULY 5 Mahoney Village, Main St., Albany Ave., Imlay St., Vine St., JULY 6 Main St., Albany Ave., N. Main St.,
 JULY 7 St. Peter & Unity Church JULY 8 FOODSHARE JULY 11 Colt Park, Stonington St. JULY 12 E. & W. Morningside St., Palm St.,
 Place of Grace, Burlington St., Granby St., Franklin Ave., Benton St., Pawtucket St., Barker St., Bond St. JULY 13 St. Peter's, Trinity Chapel,
 Sacred Heart, Lady of Sorrow, Assemblies of God, Christian Liberty JULY 14 Franklin Ave., George St., Maple Ave., Roosevelt St.,
 South St., Shultas Pl. JULY 15 FOODSHARE, Weston St. JULY 18 Place of Grace, N. Main St., Cleveland Ave. JULY 19 Oliver St.,
 Flatbush Ave., Grafton St., Vernon St. JULY 20 Charter Oak Ave., Lady of Sorrow, St. Peter's, Trinity Chapel, Assemblies of God
 JULY 21 St. Peter's, Lady of Sorrow, Christian Center, Maple Ave., Bond St., Broad St., Whitmore St., Pawtucket St., Allen Pl. JULY 22
 FOODSHARE, Hispanic Senior Center, Russ St. JULY 25 Hillside Ave. JULY 26 St. Peter's, Sacred Heart, Winship St. JULY 27 St. Peter's,
 Lady of Sorrow JULY 28 FOODSHARE JULY 29 Orange St., Newton St., Chadwick St., S. Whitney St., Amity St.

AUG 2005

AUGUST 1 FOODSHARE AUGUST 2 Nelton Court AUGUST 3 Russ St. AUGUST 4 Albany Ave., Blue Hills Ave. AUGUST 5
 FOODSHARE AUGUST 8 Russ St., Broad St., Wadsworth St. AUGUST 9 Fairmont St., Green St., Brook St. AUGUST 10 Ward St.,
 Zion St. AUGUST 11 Westbourne Parkway, Mahoney Village, Washington St., Russ St., Murphy Rd. AUGUST 12 FOODSHARE,
 Hispanic Senior Center, Park St., Wadsworth St., Wethersfield Ave., Anawan St. AUGUST 15 Maple Ave., Russ St.
 AUGUST 16 Main St., Franklin Ave. AUGUST 17 Homestead St. AUGUST 18 Park Terr., Putnam St., Putnam Heights,
 Edward St., Murtle St. AUGUST 19 FOODSHARE Norwich St., Buckingham St. AUGUST 22 FOODSHARE, Chapelle
 Garden AUGUST 23 Chapelle Garden AUGUST 24 Garden St. AUGUST 25 Garden St. AUGUST 26 FOODSHARE, Hispanic
 Senior Center, Westbrook St. AUGUST 29 Albany Ave., Greenfield St., Oakland Terr. AUGUST 30 Homestead Ave., Adams St.,
 Kent St., Baltimore St. AUGUST 31 Whitmore St., Bond St., Barker St., Campfield Ave.

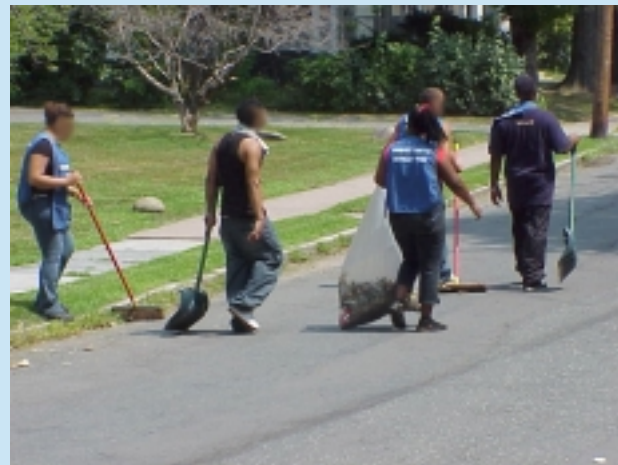
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT HOTLINE
756-7000
PLEASE CALL WITH YOUR PROJECT

COMMUNITY SERVICE INITIATIVES

New Projects Helping Our Communities

Letting large debris and litter accumulate throughout a neighborhood is often an invitation for unwanted criminal activity. Recognizing this, several local organizations including the Hartford Police Department, the State and City Department's of Public Health, and the Community Court in Hartford, recently joined forces in several clean-up projects. During these clean-ups, Hartford Police would tag and have towed illegally parked vehicles, the DPW team would remove large debris, and the Community Court's community service work crews would clean up small litter.

Pictures below are from the Vine Street clean up on August 12, 2005. Faces are blurred to protect defendants privacy.



In exchange for the social worker supplied by the Towns of Bloomfield and West Hartford to assess defendants from those towns, the Community Court supplies one truck of defendants each week to perform community service in those communities.

Pictured below is one such crew cleaning up the grounds of the Hillcrest Community Center in West Hartford.



PAM PASHA

Working to Help People in Need

The Community Court is pleased to recognize one of its most unsung employees, Pam Pasha, Administrative Assistant for Public Defender Ray Cuatto. In addition to managing the Public Defender's office at the Community Court, Pam (pictured at right) works tirelessly to help clients of the Public Defender, doing everything from helping them to connect to service to just lending a sympathetic ear.

"Pam is a hard-working and caring person who always goes above and beyond the call of duty to help others in need," Public Defender Ray Cuatto said. "We are very lucky to have her working with us."



ATR AT COMMUNITY COURT

Enhancing Connections to Social Services

The Community Court in Hartford is pleased to announce that the Access to Recovery (ATR) Program will be sending one of its case managers to work with the Court's on-site social services team each Wednesday between 9 a.m. and noon.

The ATR program, administered by the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, is a team of programs designed to assist persons, age 18 years and older, with a predominant substance abuse problem. Recognizing that substance abuse recovery is not achieved by treatment alone, ATR also provides links to childcare, job training, and housing. In order to provide this wide array of services, ATR is working with a vast network of outside providers, enabling clients to not only be linked with services, but, in many cases, to have choices on who they work with.

"We are very pleased to have ATR working with us at the Community Court," Court Coordinator Chris Pleasanton said. "ATR expands the opportunities for our defendants and enhances our ability to help those in need."

For more information on the Access to Recovery Program, please call the toll-free ATR Information Line at 866-580-3922.

FROM BROOKLYN TO HARTFORD:

A Legal Revolution in Progress by Greg Berman

On May 24th, PBS aired a remarkable documentary about a criminal justice experiment in a crime-plagued neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. “Red Hook Justice” is the story of the Red Hook Community Justice Center, a neighborhood-based court that is testing a new response to low-level criminal behavior like drug possession, prostitution and vandalism.

Instead of sentencing offenders to short-term jail (or, worse, to nothing at all), the Justice Center combines punishment and help, mandating low-level miscreants to perform community service and receive the kinds of services – drug treatment, job training, mental health counseling – that might, with a little bit of luck, help them avoid coming back to court again.

What does this look like in practice? In the “Red Hook Justice” documentary, we meet Anthony, a teenager with a propensity for misbehavior who is linked to a dizzying array of services, including job training and life skills classes. We meet Michael, who is busted for marijuana and given a chance to avoid both jail and a criminal record if he successfully completes community service. And we meet Leticia, a drug-addicted former prostitute who attempts to wrestle her drug habit under control with the help of court-ordered drug treatment.

Under the leadership of Connecticut’s Chief Court Administrator Hon. Joseph H. Pellegrino, Hartford has been testing its own community court, holding petty offenders accountable through community service and linking them to social services. Indeed, Hartford is among three dozen American cities that are adapting elements of the Red Hook model. Even the Blair government in England has gotten into the act, launching a community court of their own in Liverpool.

Presiding over the whole enterprise is Judge Alex Calabrese, who ensures accountability by requiring offenders to return to court on a regular basis to report on their compliance with his orders. Calabrese espouses a concept known as “problem-solving justice.” Problem-solving justice is the idea that courts should do more than just process cases like widgets in a factory. Rather, they should affirmatively seek to address the problems of defendants, victims and communities. According to Calabrese, “As a judge in a traditional court, I felt like an artist with two colors: in jail or out of jail. At the Justice Center, I have the tools to give people the opportunity to change their lives.”

Problem-solving judges like Calabrese recognize that today’s criminal courts bear little resemblance to the courts we read about in our grade school civics classes. Spend a few hours watching Court TV or “Law and Order” and you’d think that the typical criminal case is a serious felony involving a hardened criminal, a celebrity or both. In real life, the typical criminal is a petty offender suffering from addiction, mental illness or homelessness. Moreover, rather than hard-fought trials where prosecutors and defense attorneys go head-to-head, the vast majority of cases in American courts are resolved by plea bargain.

New York State Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye explains the problem this way: “In many of today’s cases, the traditional approach yields unsatisfying results. The addict arrested for drug dealing is adjudicated, does time, then goes right back to dealing on the street. Every legal right is protected, all procedures are followed, yet we aren’t making a dent in the underlying problem. Not good for the parties involved. Not good for the community. Not good for the courts.” Put simply, there’s not much to recommend about business as usual in American courts.

That’s why experiments like the one in Red Hook are so important. The Red Hook project is still in its early stages, but already it has achieved some promising results. Public confidence in justice is up, as are property values. Levels of fear are down along with crime rates. For the first time in more than a generation, Red Hook recently went an entire calendar year without a single homicide.

While the Red Hook project is a one-of-a-kind experiment, those interested in the concept of problem-solving justice don’t have to go to New York to see it in action. Under the leadership of Connecticut’s Chief Court Administrator Hon. Joseph H. Pellegrino, Hartford has been testing its own community court, holding petty offenders accountable through community service and linking them to social services. Indeed, Hartford is among three dozen American cities that are adapting elements of the Red Hook model. Even the Blair government in England has gotten into the act, launching a community court of their own in Liverpool.

Will the innovations being tested in Red Hook, Hartford and Liverpool transform the way that all courts work? It is too soon to tell. But these projects do offer a beacon of hope for those of us who care about justice. Coming off an era when the conventional wisdom was that “nothing works,” that it is impossible to change the behavior of offenders, this is good news indeed.

Greg Berman is co-author of Good Courts: The Case for Problem-Solving Justice (The New Press) and the director of the Center for Court Innovation, a think tank that promotes new thinking about how courts can improve public confidence in justice. This article is printed here with his kind permission.